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SUBJECT: VIKE-FREIBERGA'S CANDIDACY TO HEAD EU "WISEMEN"
PANEL

Classified By: Charge d'affaires a.i. Stuart M Seldowitz. Reason: 1.4
(b and d)

¶1. (C/NF) Peteris Ustubs, foreign policy advisor to Latvian PM Kalvitis, called in pol/econ chief late November 21. Ustubs had just returned from Paris and a meeting with Sarkozy's diplomatic advisor AMB Levitte. Sarkozy wants to propose former Latvian President Vaira Vike-Freiberga (VVF) to head the wisemen panel on the future of the EU that is expected to be adopted at the December European Council. The Latvians responded positively to the idea. According to Ustubs, Paris had done work in advance and received favorable responses to VVF's candidacy in Lisbon, Vienna and Berlin. The response in London was mixed but the British didn't say no. VVF will travel December 7 to Paris for meeting with Sarkozy. The Latvians have agreed that they will start lobbying the other member states intensively over next days and weeks. Ustubs followed up on November 23 to report that he had his own discussions with Merkel's office and came away with strong German support. The Hungarian PM also sounded supportive during his November 22 visit to Riga, although he did not offer a firm commitment to support VVF

¶2. (C/NF) Comment: We leave to EU experts to judge the likelihood of Vike-Freiberga getting this position, but the Latvians are clearly prepared to work hard to get her in this position. Vike-Freiberga is a committed trans-Atlanticist and her heading this group would be a good thing for US interests, we believe. She has often articulated a collaborative view of trans-Atlantic relations and expressed frustration at overlap and competition between the EU and NATO.

SELDOWITZ